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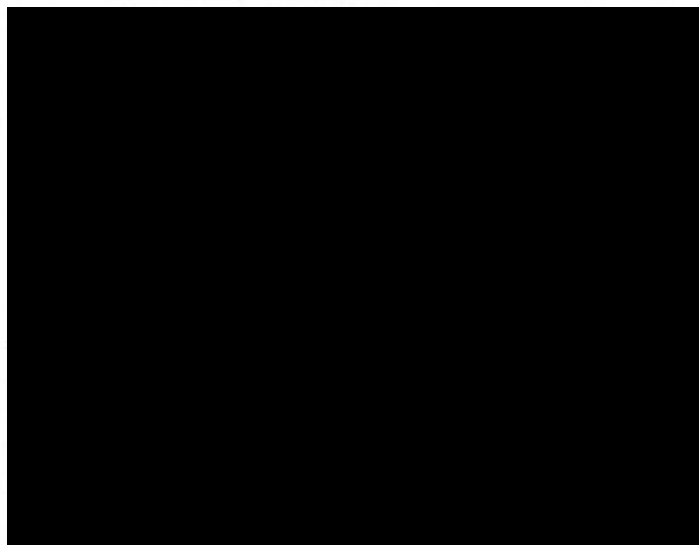
THE NEW FRONTIER: AN ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE NEW MEDIA POLITICAL  
COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGNING

by

Kaitlin Ann Mueller

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:



Dean of the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

### THE NEW FRONTIER: AN ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE NEW MEDIA POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGNING

by Kaitlin Ann Mueller

May 2011

*Objectives:* In the age of new media communication, politics has taken a swift turn as the Internet lends itself to quicker and less expensive contact. Politicians in all realms have adopted its communicative aspects in many forms as a means of promoting themselves and staying in contact with their constituents. What causes politicians to be more “connected” than others? And secondly, does that “connectivity” lead to successful elections? In this analysis, we will discuss what contributes to a United States Senator’s connectivity, and if his or her heightened connectivity led to a higher probability of winning elections. *Units of analysis:* The senators from the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Senate. *Data/Methods:* For this analysis, binary regression will be used. Our units of analysis will be dissected using logistic regression to determine what variables are statistically significant. For the second half of this analysis, the dependent variable will be a binary measure of successfully won elections. In this second part, our original connectivity measure will assume the spot of an independent variable. *Hypothesis:* State poverty rating and Leadership rating will be the two most important variables in determining a senator’s connectivity score, and subsequently, the more connected the senator is, the higher probability he or she has of winning an election.

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my grandmother, Nancy Anne Moore Krueger Clatworthy. You gave me the hunger for knowledge, the drive to accomplish anything a man can do (only better), and the “horse sense” to battle through life. Your “shoes” will always be too big to fill; but with a little duct tape, the Girl Scout manual, a paint brush, and a high quality manure rake...I will do my absolute best. I love you more.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, the writer would like to thank the Lord, for His gift of creation and the feeble intelligence given to absorb but a fraction of all that it contains. I would especially like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Troy Gibson, for his continued honesty, patience, and input from the very start of this project. Not only is Dr. Gibson an esteemed political scientist and theologian, but also a comforting confidant, respected mentor, and friend. His impact on my life cannot be overstated. I am beyond thankful and honored for the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Marek Steedman and Dr. Joseph Parker. These men are both noted scholars in their research fields, as well as, talented professors who possess an unprecedented passion for their students. Thank you for investing your time, brainpower, and energy into making this research a success.

Special thanks go to my parents, Harry and Kristin Mueller. After the many drafts sent back and forth for proofing, I know you are both thankful that I am an only child. Dad, thank you for challenging me to think for myself from a very young age, as well as engraving your living example of integrity on my heart. You are, quite simply, the most wonderful man I have ever known. Mom, thank you for being my editor, giver of sound advice, and best friend. Without the guidance from both of you, and the sovereignty and protection of God, I would not be the woman I am today, and this manuscript would be incomplete. Thank you all for your hand in this journey.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*"We believe that our connections to other people matter most... to know who we are, we must understand how we are connected."*<sup>1</sup>

The idea of studying social networks is as old as time. Now, with the new development of their cyber networks and new media, comparing and contrasting traditional networks to their cyber network equivalent, has been an obvious point of research. Christakis and Fowler, in their book *Connected*, delve into all aspects of the modern social network. Their connection between the physical networks to the cyber networks is that although one might be larger in scale, complex, and modern, they also show a universal and innate quality human beings have to feel connected to one another. *The Social Media Bible* agrees by explaining how social media and networking feeds the "intellectual needs we humans have to connect with other humans."<sup>2</sup> Whether that connection comes from stories around an African savanna fire, or through a "Facebook chat" on the popular social networking site, it does not matter. They are the same beast, in different clothes.<sup>3</sup> Twitter, the new star of social networking was launched in 2006 by Evan Williams and Jack Dorsey.<sup>4</sup> "Twitter has become the world's water cooler" says Adam Ostrow, editor of the social media blog *Mashable*.<sup>5</sup> Gary King who is a Harvard statistician and co-founder of Crimson Hexagon designed what he calls a "VoxTrot algorithm." "CNN uses it to sift through tweets to gauge opinion on everything from

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<sup>1</sup> N.A. Christakis and J.H. Fowler, *Connected* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Lon Safko, *The Social Media Bible* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2010), 4.

<sup>3</sup> N.A. Christakis and J.H. Fowler, *Connected* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), 257.

<sup>4</sup> Marco R. Della Cava, "Twitter Power," *USA Today*, May 25, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



politics to movies.”<sup>6</sup> One twitter user, @revjtw “tweets,” “In this day and age - the tweet is more powerful than the pen.”

The research problem in the case of this analysis deals with the claims made in regards to the Internet. A great deal of time and conversations are spent on discussing the rapid speed at which the Internet transfers information. A convincing argument can be made for the efficiency of speed and cost that is a natural benefactor of the Internet’s many functions. However, there has been little evidence to prove that all of these “positive” traits are actually helping candidates more than the traditional forms of communications and campaigning. The purpose of this analysis is to lessen the gap between this missing information. Given the large range of political campaign communication, the research for this thesis will primarily focus upon the elements that contributed to the United States Senators’ “connectivity,” and to see if that level of connectivity positively increased the probability they had in winning their elections.

The Internet has caused political scientists, like all other scientists, to reevaluate the starting points of their research. Political communications and campaigning has always been a complex string of events, people, situations, money, time, and strategy; and for a while, all those efforts were focused on a person-to-person basis, or through the phenomena of television. Although, the new technology of the Internet has not made older forms of communication obsolete, it has, however, trumped the existing forms in efficiency and speed depending on the situation. The Internet has the capacity of reaching more people, in less time. This is one of the most weighted factors, as far as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



motivation is concerned for a politician to jump on board with new media communications.

Christakis and Fowler in their book *Connected* offer four components of what exactly the Internet accomplishes, they are: “(1) *Enormity*: a vast increase in the scale of our networks and the numbers of people who might be reached to join them. (2) *Communality*: a broadening of the scale by which we can share information and contribute to collective efforts. (3) *Specificity*: an impressive increase in the particularity of the ties we can form. (4) *Virtuality*: the ability to assume virtual identities.”<sup>7</sup> The differences between those who have “jumped” on the opportunities of new media communications, to those who have not, will be the basis of our analysis. In the business world, a company can ask, “What is our return on investment (or ROI) with social media?” According to Lon Safko’s book *The Social Media Bible*, there is consistently an impressive growth curve with social media investments. Even more, these results continue to show strengthened relationship across the board-which in politics, is the name of the game.<sup>8</sup> The research questions are raised then are the following: what contributes to a United States Senator’s “connectivity,”<sup>9</sup> and does that level of connectivity positively affect the probability of winning elections?

### Background and Overview

A bit of history is necessary to fully understand how the tool the world refers to as “the Internet” made its way to where it is today, and how it is used both politically and socially.

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<sup>7</sup> Christakis and Fowler, 275.

<sup>8</sup> Safko, 78-79.

<sup>9</sup> “Connectivity,” is a word used in the broad sense to describe the multiple levels of a unit’s usage and participation in the many realms of social networking via the Internet.

The proverbial “Internet,” capital “I,” started in 1962, by a man by the name of J.C.R. Licklider, who used a term “Galactic Network” to describe a massive worldwide network of computers. In 1965, Larry G. Roberts successfully created computer networks that functioned in a long distance capacity. He also developed the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET), which became an important step for the Internet to expand upon in the year of 1966. Then Bob Kahn and Vint Cerf invented the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP), which moves data on the modern Internet. This advancement was started in the years of 1972 and 1973.<sup>10</sup> By the later part of 1990 the very first website, web page, and web server had debuted. *The Social Media Bible* states, “The advent of global computer communications was physicist Sir Timothy John ‘Tim’ Berners-Lee’s dream.”<sup>11</sup> In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee wrote a blue print proposal depicting the ease that computers could theoretically communicate with one another.<sup>12</sup>

These great computer scientists are only the very beginning. From the creation of the Internet came the vast sharing of useful and not useful information. Universities used Internet sites as the basis for sharing their information, and email became a reliable tool commonplace to every person in every field of employment. The web became mainstream in 1995.<sup>13</sup> After a string of basic networking sites like myspace.com, and blogs such as xanga.com were created, Facebook came to the fore in the year of 2005.

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<sup>10</sup> Boutell.com Inc. There are additional people that this website outlines, such as, Radia Perlman and Tim Berners-Lee (and more). Many people added to the overall design or idea to create the Internet as it is used today.

<sup>11</sup> Safko, 87-91.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Communication using the Internet became as normal, or more so,<sup>14</sup> than picking up the telephone. Just as a candidate for office must win their seat before they are elected, the communication concepts used today by the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, initially started as a campaign technique.

The starting point of Internet campaigning and communication is Sen. John McCain's primary campaign of 2000. *Forbes Magazine's* Richard Rappaport interviewed Sen. John McCain's legendary "webmaster," Max Fose on May 29, 2000. Rappaport explains,

Campaign donations scroll down the screen in relentless real-time display...No muss, no fuss, no messy checks to be photocopied, send to the bank, and cleared-just sweet, instantly exploitable Visa, AmEx, and MasterCard electronic cash.<sup>15</sup>

The young, 28 year old Max Fose, explained that he checked the contributions several times a day, and at the point this interview was taken, the campaign contributions were running close to \$30,000 an hour. The most pertinent part of this rampant fundraising is the average amount. Donators can "mouse-click" as small as \$10, and as large as the \$250 individual maximum allowed for matching federal election funds.<sup>16</sup> For young people in the age demographic of 18-35, the ability to quickly donate to a campaign more frequently in smaller amounts makes a huge difference. A certain number of United States citizens are in college between the ages of 18 and 23, some move on to graduate work, which further delays their influx in income. These are the men and women

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<sup>14</sup> A concern with the influx of new media communications is the possible hindrance on interpersonal communication skills. Some experts fear people will soon fail when it comes to communicating with other people face-to-face.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Rappaport, *Best of The Web: "Net Vs. Norm."* Forbes ASAP, May 29, 2009. [http://www.forbes.com/asap/2000/0529/053\\_print.html](http://www.forbes.com/asap/2000/0529/053_print.html) (accessed December 2, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> The McCain/Feingold Campaign Fundraising Bill which places limitations on spending and raising of campaign funds, capping individual donations at \$250.00.

donating more across the board, in smaller amounts, more than one time. The Internet makes this possible.

*Forbes Magazine* continues, describing the changes in the political campaigning and fundraising spectrum, seemingly overnight. Rappaport writes,

At the same time McCain 2000 was raising the e-political bar, it was making Max Fose a cyberlegend...For some in the press, his ubiquitous presence raised questions about whether Fose was a real person or some digitally generated political Max Headroom, a disembodied yet personable online construct available via AOL instant messaging anytime, day or night.<sup>17</sup>

Earlier in the campaign, Fose had met an exciting husband and wife team who had invented and developed a Web site/email campaign package that was referred to as VirtualSprockets/Publisher. Their names were Tom Yeatts and Laura Kittleman. The appeal of this kind of technology is grassroots in its nature. It allowed for local committees supporting Senator McCain to “own” a local piece of the website, all the while being connected to the separate and secure homepage of the campaign “whole.” It also had a list email feature that had the capabilities of sending emails to a single recipient, or to hundreds of thousands.<sup>18</sup> Senator McCain’s team purchased the product. By early June 1999, the coding and development team had completed sites for six early primary states and had completely integrated into McCain2000.com. The volunteer list grew by 22,000, and campaign fundraising skyrocketed. Fose said, “The \$64,000 we raised in a couple of days opened our eyes.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rappaport.

<sup>18</sup> As this concept developed further, it was then replicated for use in the business sphere. Companies like ExactTarget (of Indianapolis, IN) and iContact (of Raleigh, NC) now sell mass email and social media marketing packages for business and sales outreach worldwide, after this McCain political model had proven itself a great success.

<sup>19</sup> Rappaport.



Several other “firsts” with Internet campaigning occurred within a matter of months. For the initial steps of Senator McCain, the victory did not come in securing the nomination as hoped. It did, however, make him the “maverick” in this new spectrum of political campaigning. In minutes, supporters now have access to infinite amounts of information, call lists, ways to get involved, and tools to donate money to campaign efforts with a simple click of a button.

The next phase of this Internet campaigning and communication evolution is the Gov. Howard Dean primary campaign of 2004. Gov. Howard Dean used the Internet as a staging ground to gain both electorate support and funds; and did so using the basic bones of McCain’s 2000 Internet campaign. Phil Tajitsu Nash started something called “Campaign Advantage” which makes its overall goal of formatting campaign plans in order to implement online fundraising strategies. He does this by using the Communications Theory.<sup>20</sup> Nash told America.gov, “Good online fundraising requires not just the technology, and not just the candidate, but also a message that resonates with online audiences. What that means is that the insurgent candidates, generally speaking, have a better chance of raising money.”<sup>21</sup> Nash goes on to hit on the importance of Sen. John McCain’s foundation for the Internet as a campaign tool by saying,

Incumbents, particularly, clung to old fundraising methods: speeches at a dinner after which they pocket a check. But in 2000, some candidates---among them 2008 presumed Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain---raised a few million dollars on the Internet. That was considered

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<sup>20</sup> Please see this analysis’ literature review for further material and explanation on the Communications Theory and how it will be interpreted in this analysis.

<sup>21</sup> Lea Terhune, “Internet Revolutionizes Campaign Fundraising: successful fundraising efforts appeal to average people online.” <http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/July/20080710130812mlenuhret0.6269953.html> Published July 10, 2008. America.gov published by the U.S. State Department (accessed on December 12, 2009).

so phenomenal that all of a sudden the big, traditional fundraising operations started taking the Internet seriously.<sup>22</sup>

And from this fundraising phenomenon comes what is referred to in the political spectrum as “The Dean Effect.” Howard Dean, a physician and former Vermont Governor, did not secure the Democratic Party’s nomination for the United States Presidency. He did, however, make unprecedented political fundraising history using the Internet and new media communications. He was the first to employ the techniques of “appealing to average Americans on the Internet and bringing them together in Internet-generated “meet-ups.”<sup>23</sup> Gov. Howard Dean further secured the art of campaigning using the Internet as a valid and operational tool for success. The “webmasters” for his 2004 primary campaign perfected the skills needed for their assistance in Barrack Obama’s senatorial campaign in the state of Illinois in 2004, and ultimately, his future endeavors, campaigning and securing the United States Presidency in 2008.

The Obama factor takes Internet campaigning to the next level. His success, according to Terhune, came from harnessing Internet community energy through social networking sites, like Facebook. Terhune explains, “In 2007, Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes left the company to join Senator Obama’s campaign. He helped develop Senator Obama’s campaign website where people connect with neighborhood groups, volunteer, donate money and read the latest news from the Obama campaign.”<sup>24</sup> At the time this article was written and published, Senator Obama had surpassed a million supporters on Facebook alone. Per the advice of Chris Hughes, Senator Obama formulated a presence on other competing networking sites as well, such as: MySpace, Twitter, MyBatanga,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



MiGente and AsianAve. Some of these networks have a highly specified demographic of subscribers. For example, AsianAve is a site where those of Asian descent may connect and network with one another.<sup>25</sup>

Serving his term as the United States President, Obama has pledged to keep up this communication with the citizens of America. One cannot help but question if his verbal claim of doing so was to “increase the transparency of the executive branch” or if in fact he is strategically employing the Permanent Campaign Theory<sup>26</sup> to remain in contact and good standing with his constituents. Regardless of his intentions, there is no denying that he is the United States first “tech president.” Using his phone to update his personal Twitter account, contacting the citizens of America through the means of both the television screen, as well as, their computer screens, President Obama is paving the road to communicating effectively with those who placed him in power. Where President Reagan, the “Great Communicator” succeeded in speaking plainly and directly to the people, President Obama uses the same approach of plain and direct “speech,” but he does so by utilizing the giant social media sources of his time.

The aforementioned three-part evolution to Internet political campaigning and communication can serve as three equal and expanding case studies. One can think of their relation in terms of a pyramid. Senator McCain’s primary campaign of 2000 can serve as the bottom layer of foundational building blocks; Gov. Howard Dean’s primary campaign of 2004 is responsible for adding the “meat to the bones,” layering on top of

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<sup>25</sup> It is important to mention that President Obama was not the only candidate using these tools for a means of campaigning. His opponent, John McCain was no stranger to Internet networking, but the demographic of young people overwhelmingly flocked to Barrack Obama’s appeal and he quickly locked hold on their support. It could be hypothesized that the younger generation’s vote was the deciding factor of the 2008 Presidential election.

<sup>26</sup> Please see this analysis’ literature review for a more detailed explanation of how the Permanent Campaign Theory factors into the data this research seeks to explain.

Sen. John McCain's foundation. Finally, Sen. Barack Obama's presidential campaign of 2008 used Internet communications within the right balance to ultimately secure the victory. Senator McCain was the original guinea pig, followed by the "Dean Effect" and his fundraising savvy, and finally, President Obama's ability to secure of the age demographic of 18 to 25 ensured his campaign's success.

Certainly the first step for any politician is campaigning to gain the seat, but communication does not stop once you gain victory.<sup>27</sup> Some may argue that communication becomes infinitely more important after you win the election. The first part of this study will look at those who have already secured their seat in an election, and their level of connectivity per the manufactured standards.<sup>28</sup> I will break down the candidate in terms of their constituency, the office holder as a person, and finally their centrality in Congress. Once it can be determined *what* makes a candidate more connected, then I seek to answer the more pragmatic question of whether or not that *connectivity* significantly helps in winning elections.

#### Limitations and Assumptions

The Internet is, in fact, a beast. It is infinite in its nature, and difficult to condense in terms small enough to study. As the data is compiled for analysis, there is a standard by which one has to determine what will be considered as a reputable source. In the new media communications world, this becomes even more difficult. There is a fine line between what constitutes as an official website for a candidate, and another that supports their campaign, but is not stamped "official." In addition, sites like Wikipedia, Twitter

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<sup>27</sup> This is according to the Permanent Campaign Theory. Please see the literature review of this analysis for a more detailed discussion on how this theory works and is applicable to this research.

<sup>28</sup> See the Connectivity Rubric used for this analysis in Appendix A to discern what the measurement standards are for this specific research.



feeds, personal political blogs, or sources that the standard measure of academia would deem unworthy have to be included and analyzed here. The typical “rules” do not apply. The unusual nature of this subject matter opens the doors to sources and citations that may not be acceptable in academic research outside this specific research focus.

The initial leap of this research brought forth an important problem to solve. With ample time, both the House of Representatives and Senate could be evaluated for their unique connectivity levels. This problem created further issues to investigate. The House and the Senate are separate and unique organizational bodies in the United States Congress. If one researcher were to embark upon the full view of Congress’ connectivity, that same researcher would essentially be committing to two fully separate research goals, due to the vast differences in term, focus, turnover, and leadership structure of the two bodies. The clear and concise organizational structure of the Senate, with two senators per state, makes this body of Congress the easiest to dissect from an organizational and numbers standpoint. In addition, the longer term lengths, unique leadership and seniority atmosphere opened up very clear research doors. For this reason the Senate was chosen as the focus of this research over the House of Representatives.

Of the hundreds upon hundreds of political science documents that discuss research about Congress, very few of them speak exclusively to the Senate. In the literature review section, political scientists like Mayhew, Jacobsen, and Fenno are all discussed in relation to the research problem in this analysis, however, it should be noted that the majority of their data dealt almost primarily with the House of Representatives, just like the rest of the political science community. This imposes certain obstacles that could not be feasibly solved for the purposes of this manuscript. Though I took these

limitations into consideration, the lack of an existing promising alternative tied me down to utilizing the best of what was available in the world of political academia.

Through the collection of data, it became clear that there were certain limitations on defining what exactly “well connected” would mean. Initially, a count measure seemed to be the most logical. Unfortunately, there was a significant lack of consistency on what kinds of communication were used by the senators in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. At the same time, there were a handful of communication forms that were used universally across the board. In order to combat this problem, a rubric was created. Each senator was assessed using this rubric, and a total number of elements of communication was tallied and circled. Those senators who employed eight or more forms of new media communication were considered “well connected” and those who used seven or less were considered “less connected.” This assessment was then transferred into a binary measure: well-connected units were assigned a “1” value, and less connected units were assigned a “0” value. All data was collected in a single day to prevent unfair variance that a time lapse in data collection may have added.

For the second section of the analysis, the dependent variable will also be utilized as a binary measure. As the senatorial “classes” are distributed amongst the entire chamber, only a third of the members will be up for election at a given time. This fact offers an uncertainty between years of election. As many outside influences and media changes have an effect on election cycles, the limitations of this research exist, as I could not control for these changes empirically. For this reason, this research is forced to assume that although reelections occur in different time periods, that time and



circumstances are always changing, therefore, our results are still universally applicable and valid despite the uncontrollable nature of this variable.

The beginning of this analysis started with a basic assumption that the age of the candidate would have a strong correlation with how well connected the senator was. This was primarily assumed to be the case because members of the baby boomer generation and older finished college prior to the explosion of personal computer sales. It is assumed that the younger senators would be both more comfortable and more apt to utilize every resource that the Internet and new media can provide by way of communications and campaigning. Though this problem actually solves itself by recognizing the work in a senator's office, especially social media work, is generally the responsibility of the senator's staff, not the senator themselves. This fact eradicates the problem originally posed.

The last limitation that this research juggles is the discrepancy of the "n" value between Part I and Part II. In Part I of the research, all of the 111<sup>th</sup> Senate were used in accordance to the data collected. This places the "n" value of Part I with a total of 100. When Part II is discussed, only the number of seats that were won by an incumbent or lost by an incumbent in the 2010 midterm election were evaluated. Our "n" value of Part II switches to 25. Because we are dealing in terms of standard deviation, the "n" value does not actually matter, however, the higher your "n" value the more accurate your standard deviation will be. With this understanding, this author acknowledges the drop in "n" value from Part I to Part II to be problematic. However, relatively speaking, the "n" values in Part I and Part II are both low. Even with a change from one to another,

because the measurements are analyzed by their respective standard deviations, the actual numbers represent nothing more than the crudeness of the data present.

### Terminology

The main terminology used throughout this analysis deals with determining the candidate's "connectivity." Connectivity may be defined in several ways, however, when it is used in this research, it is used to determine the frequency with which a political candidate communicates through new media sources. It can be communication through an email newsletter, Facebook page, myspace, rss feeds, and many more. Connectivity is how often a senator employs new media methods of campaigning and communication.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Communication Theory

The Communication Theory, to use Harold Lasswell's definition is "who says what to whom in what channel with what effect." The Communication Theory dates back to Aristotle, when he illustrated that the speaker indicated a message to the listener.<sup>29</sup> As scientists researched further, the Shannon and Weaver Communication Model, as well as, Schramm's Models were built.<sup>30</sup> Although the Communications Theory is expansive and difficult to define clearly, it will be used in this analysis in its most basic form, per the Lasswell definition. We will seek to determine what senators communicate to their constituents most frequently, and the affect that this frequency has on winning elections. Internet campaigning uses this umbrella Communications Theory and its sub-models, in reaching a message to a viewer. The question is, is it as efficient as the traditional forms?<sup>31</sup> Are there differences between listening to a message, or the joint retention of hearing *and* seeing a message, than just simply reading one upon a screen? Is there a disconnection between the speaker and the listener? Can the Communications Theory be altered to adapt to the model of "Political Internet Campaigning" and the proper use of networking sites, like Facebook? The Communications Theory will be the guide this study uses to understand communicative success or failure with regards to new media communication. More specifically, through

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<sup>29</sup> The Lasswell Communication Model would follow Aristotle's Model in the continuation of the development of the Communication Theory.

<sup>30</sup> Richard S. Croft develops "The Communication Theory" from its very beginnings with Aristotle, and guiding the reader through to the development we have today.

<sup>31</sup> Efficiency here will be recognized as the benefits of using Internet communications (like winning elections or reelections) outweighing the costs (like time, man power, and funding). If this cost/benefit analysis proves successful, then the communication is deemed efficient.

the accumulated research, this theory will be tested by assuming that those who win their election clearly communicated a message that was positively received by their constituents. If these same senators scored as “well connected” then the communications theory proves that their message was well received by the means of the Internet and new media communications. This theory will come into play mostly in determining whether or not communication has positive effects on the probability of winning elections.

### Ervine Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis

Another relevant theory is sociologist Ervine Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis Theory.<sup>32</sup> The entire premise of his theory is based in terms of a stage and how people play their part on the front stage and back stage. The front stage is an analogy for how people interact with other people in open society. The back stage is used as an analogy for the way people really are when they are alone; how they comb their hair as they get ready in the morning, the conscious thought of who they are and how they want to be perceived. Facebook and multiple other new media forms serve as an impeccable comparison. Take Facebook as an example; the “front stage” in Goffman's analysis can be linked to what Facebook members call their “wall” and “profile.” The Facebook wall serves as the front stage for conscious social interaction with each other, documented in the form of posts and comments. The “back stage” in Goffman's analysis can be connected to the conscious steps a Facebook member goes through to edit their “profile,” which are words and messages visible to the Facebook cyber world and determine how one is perceived by the Internet “public.” The point being, you can “package” yourself utilizing the back stage mechanism to be whomever you want to be. Political candidates

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<sup>32</sup> “Ervine Goffman: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,” Wadsworth, accessed May 1 2010, <http://employees.cfmc.com/adamb/writings/goffman.htm>.



have the opportunity to do the same with Goffman's back stage premise. Instead of the instant physical and emotional reactions by the public to a candidate, a candidate has time to "package" his or herself in order to present their "person" in the most "likeable" light. Facebook and other new media forms are tools to help such candidates "package" not only their "person" but their overall campaign image.<sup>33</sup> On Fox and Friends Morning News, Wednesday, February 23, 2011, a news story stated that many companies are now asking job candidates for their Facebook password so the company can see if the candidate is the kind of person they would want working for them.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis will relate to Mahew and Fennos' theories as a senator "presents" themselves to their constituents, fellow peers, and the world. Goffman's "presentation" is behavior conducted with the goal of keeping their senate seat. Pragmatically speaking, as a senator utilizes these different new media outlets, Goffman shows both the conscious and unconscious reactions of the senator's desire to keep their seat. This theory is intimately linked to the following theory, the Permanent Campaign Theory.

#### Permanent Campaign Theory

There is a school of thought in the political science world that a politician *never* stops campaigning. The exception to this theory would be when the candidate has already made a choice to abstain from re-election, or depending on the office they hold, they are in a lame duck cycle and will never be held accountable in the form of a democratic vote. Therefore, they act in accordance with their conscience and not

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<sup>33</sup> Z. Tufekci, "Grooming, Gossip, Facebook, and Myspace." *Information, Communication & Society*, (2008) 11(4), 544-564. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

necessarily with their constituents. This concept is more readily known as the Permanent Campaign Theory.<sup>35</sup> This theory will be most pertinent to the second half of our analysis, when we determine if a senator's level of connectivity positively affects the probability of having a winning an election. This theory is also a solid support as Mahew, Jacobson, and Fenno theories are explored.

#### Mayhew's Congressional Campaign ABC's

Expanding upon the Permanent Campaign Theory, David R. Mahew's insight on congressional elections is important. Mayhew cites the three main activities required of U.S. Congressmen to do daily in order to keep their jobs in Congress. These activities are advertising, credit claiming, and position taking.

Mayhew defines the advertising component as "any effort to disseminate one's name among constituents in such a fashion as to create a favorable image but in messages having little or no issue content."<sup>36</sup> This response directly correlates to the Permanent Campaign Theory and Goffman's Dramaturgical Analysis. This mental consciousness of constant "self advertising" is always at the forefront of their minds, even as they enact legislation. Through marketing, companies spend millions of dollars building their corporate image and brand awareness. It is no different in politics and public policy. In the political environment, it is important to promote your experience, family, sincerity, independence, concern for constituents, honesty, and responsiveness.

"A second activity may be called *credit-claiming* defined here as acting so as to generate a belief in a relevant political actor (or actors) that one is personally responsible

<sup>35</sup> Ornstein & Mann, *The Permanent Campaign and It's Future*, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> David C. Kozak and John D. Macartney, *Congress and Public Policy: A Sourcebook of Documents and Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc. 1990), 49.



for causing the government, or some unit thereof, to do something that the actor (or actors) considers desirable.”<sup>37</sup> According to Mayhew, “Credit or blame would attach in Downsian fashion to the doings of the government as a whole.”<sup>38</sup> Our congressmen pick and choose the achievements that best suit their districts and take credit for it. In this way, we can see an overlap as congressmen accomplish two tasks simultaneously. In our analysis, we measure centrality, or how close to the center workings of congressional power they rank. This issue can be measured by how many bills they sponsor, the number of bills they cosponsor, and maybe their committee involvement. Though, with Mayhew’s research, we see that this act may both show a senator’s centrality in power and contribute to their conscious involvement in permanent campaigning. As they show their constituents what positive legislation they have helped to pass, they can indicate their central power position and self advertise their work to those who can vote for them again. Many congressmen are members of a committee that blocks a bill, and they do take credit for it. We also note Fowler’s Reinforcement Effect Theory which explains how the “good ole boys” in Congress assist each other in mutually beneficial legislation. This example is a real life image of the old phrase, “if you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.” These coupled together make for a deadly combination.

The third activity our congressmen engage in is *position taking*. Mayhew defines this term as “the public enunciation of a judgmental statement on anything likely to be of interest to political actors. The statement may take the form of a roll-call vote.”<sup>39</sup> The congressman who is a position taker is more of a speaker rather than a doer. All of these

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 49-77.

elements combined can contribute to the “brand” of the office holder. Similar to the studies in business and marketing, the stronger the brand of the product, the stronger the product will appear to its specific public. Professional politicians have no shame when it comes to re-election. If advertising works—they go for it. If credit claiming works in their district, then claim credit for whatever works. Last but not least if the voters want the deficit reduced, then your position is to reduce the deficit. This research by David Mayhew helps make the connection between continuously campaigning and the effect senators have in reinforcing their current position of power.<sup>40</sup> In this research, this factor will be measured by a leadership variable, which will indicate selected party leaders, committee chairs, and ranking committee members over the rest. This leadership variable will also be tested with the number of cosponsored bills a senator has, showing their centrality to power their communication, and their “pull” within the networking of the senate.

#### Fenno’s “Homestyle” Theory

In a very similar capacity to Mayhew, Richard Fenno accounts for congressional campaigning efforts with the specific niche of constituencies. Many studies have been conducted on members of the United States House of Representatives and Senate, but Richard Fenno is one of the few political scientists who have studied the U.S. members in their constituency. One of the reasons for this omission is that it is almost impossible to quantify a member’s district as it relates to the representative, their trips home, how they vote, how they are viewed, and their leadership within Congress. Although Fenno’s study was published in 1977, it is relevant to the new media trends in politics today.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



Richard Fenno primarily addresses two questions he feels have been left underdeveloped. "First, what does the representative see when he or she sees a constituency? Second, what consequences do these perceptions have for his or her behavior?"<sup>41</sup> Fenno actually traveled to seventeen districts with their respective representatives and puppy-dogged them around while they were in their home "scene." In many ways he acted more like a sociologist than a political scientist utilizing this kind of methodology and data collection. He was able to quantify number of trips home annually, per seniority, per reelection, per geographic area, and per family residence. He quantified staff expenditures in Washington and in the representative's home region and compared them.

Is it equally important to understand what happens "at home" in the representative's legal district, as it is to understand what is happening on the floor of Congress? Fenno found it important to study the "representatives' perceptions of their constituencies while they are actually in their constituencies—at the constituency end of the linkage."<sup>42</sup> He first viewed the constituency as an entity "whose boundaries have been fixed by state legislative enactment or by court decision."<sup>43</sup> As we are told during election cycles, Rep. Smith's district is mostly Republican or Democrat, made up of hard working, independent people, or this district is rural, made up of farmers, etc. Within each of these constituencies, a congressman might refer to his "re-election constituency" which is a term used by Fenno to describe how the congressmen views the difference

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Fenno, U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration, *American Political Science Review* 71 (September 1977), 883-917. Reprinted with permission of the American Political Science Review for *Congress and Public Policy*, 188.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

between those who vote for him and those who do not. The House member might refer to a particular area as an area where "I do well here or I run poorly here." Fenno traveled seven years analyzing home styles of congressmen. He describes the many sources of uncertainty, i.e., the threat of redistricting, external threats such as the current national deficit, Iraq war, 9-11 or the challenger during the re-election year.

Within the larger constituency, his home district, Fenno recognizes another "primary constituency." He refers to this group as the representative's "strongest supporters," "my loyalists" and "my political base."<sup>44</sup> A protected congressional seat is as much protected from primary defeat as from general election defeat. An excellent current day example of how this "primary constituency" can change due to external factors is the Pennsylvania senatorial race in the 2010 midterm election. Sen. Arlen Specter, a Republican changed party affiliation to Democrat because his primary constituency changed. Senator Specter lost in the primary race for the Democratic position. As Fenno states, "Loyalty is not the most predictable of political qualities."<sup>45</sup>

Fenno continues to dive deeper. Within the "primary constituency," he finds another group he labels as the "personal constituency." One congressman and some of his top consultants watched a NFL football game over a beer and chips. In between plays they discussed strategic plans, analyzed media pieces, discussed local personalities, and exchanged political advice. This particular group is where the congressman really opens up and relaxes. In summary, Fenno perceives that each congressman has four different constituencies, geographical, re-election, primary and personal, each nesting within the one before.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



As Fenno analyzes each congressman, he ponders what these perceptions have to do with their behavior—at home and in Washington. There are many things a congressman does in Washington that affects their support at home. The way each member votes is certainly one way to promote oneself, or it can result in criticism at home. Another way is the number of times a congressman travels to his home district. In 1973 the average number of trips home by congressmen was 35, and the average number of days spent in their districts was 138. Congressmen have to weigh dollars spent and the amount of time they feel they need to cultivate their constituency. Each member acts out at home in a way that Fenno refers to as his or her *home style*. “Each of us has his own formula—a truth that is true for him,” said one member.<sup>46</sup> Each congressman must travel to their area to present themselves and explain their activity in Washington to their respective constituencies. The first category Fenno looks at analytically is ‘the allocation of resources’—how to use staff most effectively. The second area is the personal style of the member, or the issue-oriented style, or the constituency constraints and constituency careers.

Currently, the stage is set for many opportunities of congressional style in the arena of the huge national deficit; so many members will focus on issues and their take on solving these problems because their constituents are interested in this topic. What actually propels someone into politics? It is usually this issue that a prospective member of Congress will dwell on when “presenting themselves” to their constituency. If a congressman is very articulate and verbal, he will engage in debates with his opposition

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



because it is an area he feels strong and comfortable. "His presentation of self is designed to build trust, but, as we have said, it takes time."<sup>47</sup>

In Fenno's essay, the section called *Home Style: Explanation of Washington Activity* is where the congressmen tell their constituency what they are doing and accomplishing in Washington. It is a justification that explains they are doing their job. Is he a member of an important committee? The most interesting aspect of this section was what Fenno describes as how the congressman continually disassociates himself from the activity of his colleagues and from Congress as a whole. Every member whose district he visited tried to portray themselves as different from the other members of Congress. "And members of Congress run *for* Congress by running *against* Congress."<sup>48</sup>

Though this article was written in the 1970s during President Nixon's resignation, the stage is almost exactly the same. The external factors play an important role in the electoral process. But in terms of this research analysis, the Internet and new media make the process of connecting with their constituencies easier, quicker, and cheaper. It cannot be denied that physical presence of an office holder is sometimes the most powerful play an incumbent can make, however, in the cases that physical presence is not a necessary component to the way they connect and communicate with their constituents, the Internet is the next best thing. Another advantage of new media communication in terms of constituencies is its immediacy. When the candidate is physically traveling throughout their home district, the communication direction and power is in the hands of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> For the strange nature of this particular midterm election, this could be especially important. As "Obama care," the universal health care reform bill was presented and passed, members of President Obama's party had a very "Fenno-esque" task to complete. As these Democratic congressmen underwent their re-election campaign, they were forced to take one of two paths; (1) justify their vote and the nature of the legislation and potentially sink in votes as President Obama was sinking in popularity polls; or, (2) fight against "Obama care" and their fellow Democratic party members ... and the congress as a whole.

the candidate. They determine where and when they interact with members of their constituency. But with new media, this power play changes hands slightly. The communication is now at the whim and discretion of the constituent who logs onto a candidates website, signs up for their weekly email newsletter, and “friends” their senator on Facebook. Democracy seems to be realized in a more concrete capacity. Though the candidate may have minimal control in how they are perceived through new media outlets, the power in frequency and schedule of communications is back in the hands of the people.<sup>49</sup>

### Christakis and Fowler’s Centrality Theory

Christakis and Fowler, in their book *Connected*, talk a great deal about something they refer to as “transitivity.”<sup>50</sup> Transitivity in this research, will be referred to as, centrality. Centrality in reference to social networks is defined as the rate at which some people know others. Centrality has the capability of becoming a bad thing. If a group is too central, or extremely inclusive, all members of the network know and are in communication with one another. If everyone is only connected to those in their small inclusive group, they are, therefore, cut off from the network’s whole. In terms of the discussion in the realm of United States Senate, centrality can be an extremely important factor, and many variables may have their hand in influencing this variable of centrality. Some of the variables that may be used in this analysis to help test centrality are the senatorial “class” with whom they entered the chamber upon election, leadership positions within their party and committees, as well as a new spin on Fowlers’

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Christakis and Fowler, *Connected* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), 188-275.



sponsorship and cosponsorship of legislation.<sup>51</sup> Per Christakis and Fowlers' Centrality Theory, it is hypothesized that the more cosponsorships a senator has, the more connected they should be. This will be an important variable as I analyze each United States Senator to determine their overall connectivity rating.

### The Reinforcement Effect

An additional element connected to the inclusive and central senatorial networks, was the Reinforcement Effect discovered by J.H. Fowler. As he measured the sponsorships and cosponsorships of legislation in the United States Congress, he found a trend of "reciprocation."<sup>52</sup> He measured the amount of times one legislator cosponsored another, and then compared that to the number of times the sponsor returned the favor to the first congressman. The numbers found with regards to the rate at which this reciprocation occurred were quite high, especially within a certain central inclusive group of congressman who had held their office for a number of years.<sup>53</sup> This theory, as well as, the related Centrality Theory will be tested through the leadership and cosponsorship variables. The combination of these two should secure the standing of how deeply a senator's position and inclusiveness contribution to their senate network effects their reelection success.

### Mid-Term Election Theory and The Incumbency Advantage Theory

Abramowitz and Lanoue make several points with regards to the unique nature of congressional elections. They specify the important differences between presidential

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<sup>51</sup> N.A. Christakis and J.H. Fowler, *Connected*, New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009. Page 275. Page 188.

<sup>52</sup> J.H. Fowler, Legislative Cosponsorship Networks in the U.S. House and Senate, *Social Networks* 28 (2006): 454-65; & Fowler, J.H., Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks, *Political Analysis* 14 (2006): 456-87.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



year elections and mid-term elections. This distinction is crucial to the analysis of the 2010 mid-term congressional election results. Mid-term elections are a unique breed that, according to this article are impacted by specific factors that “in-year” congressional elections do not experience.<sup>54</sup> With the research from Abramowitz and Lanoue, we will utilize the Mid-Term Election Theory and The Incumbency Advantage Theory. These theories will be discussed in accordance with each other because there is a strong overlap in how these theories were executed in the 2010 mid-term election.

The incumbency advantage is a concept political scientists have debated and analyzed for years. It has always been clear, for one reason or another, that incumbents experienced a significant advantage when the time rolled around for their re-election. The part about incumbency that is unclear, however, is the *why*? Incumbents experienced record success rates, even in the year of 1980. House incumbents experienced over a 95% success rate in their re-election efforts, while senators experienced an 85% success rate. These rates speak to the “stability” of membership in Congress. Abramowitz and Lanoue explain that this stability in membership is impacted by specialization, seniority, and mutual defense. Additionally, a point is made towards the growing number of independents, as well as, the decreasing nature of party loyalties since the 1980s. These two factors shake up the “safe” nature that is easily misconstrued when the incumbency advantage is often discussed. As the status quo of those loyal to one party or another change and moderates increase in record numbers, the incumbency advantage, (though not lost in its entirety), has to be viewed with “kid gloves.” In the

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<sup>54</sup> Or they experience them in much less extreme ways.

words of Abramowitz and Lanoue, "no state can be considered absolutely safe for either party."<sup>55</sup>

Although the safe nature of these states feels less concrete for their incumbents, it does not mean that the advantages received by the incumbents have become obsolete. The advantages are still there, and incumbency still matters. Primarily the weight of an incumbent's forthcoming election campaign depends on the combination of the reputation of the candidate, as well as, the strength and effort of the opposing candidate. Another point to be made with regards to the Incumbency Advantage Theory has to do with the presidential coattails. A large part of congressional elections are strongly impacted by national tides. A national tide has the power to push a safe seat into a precarious one. In mid-term elections, the president is not up for reelection. Even though the performance of the president is not being tangibly evaluated by a new election, it is still evaluated indirectly by the results of the congressional mid-term elections. In recent years, the Senate has seen a larger amount of volatility than House elections.

Voter turnout has been a concept studied in America to great lengths. Whether it is apathy, or complete disinterest, American elections have always struggled numerically in getting eligible voters to the polls on Election Day. Consistently, per Jacobson's research, the voter turnout outcome in midterm elections has been consistently lower than the turnout in presidential elections.<sup>56</sup> The Obama campaign made a strong surge in tapping into eligible voting circles that had been previously untouched. The difference in comparison between the 2008 and the 2010 elections, keeping this theory in mind, is that

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<sup>55</sup> Abramowitz and Lanoue, *Congressional Elections and American Politics*. Reprinted with permission for Kozak and Macartney, *Congress and Public Policy*, (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.), 35.

<sup>56</sup> Jacobson and Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*, (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1981).



the majority of those who voted for Senator Obama in 2008 with the hype and excitement that surrounded the campaign, failed to show up in the midterm election of 2010. Campbell's Surge and Decline Theory will be discussed later in this analysis and evaluated accordingly.<sup>57</sup>

Jacobson's research<sup>58</sup> indicated that this low voter turnout in midterm elections may actually increase the advantages of incumbency. He also indicates that recent congressional actions will also play a significant part. For the 2010 congressional election, an easy culprit can be pegged. The hype surrounding the "Obamacare," or universalized health care reform over President Obama's first two years in office, could have been a major variable in the outcome of the 2010 elections. Though the incumbency advantage for most of those senators may be increased due to the low voter turnout, it is possible to gather that the strong public reaction to Obamacare and the support granted towards the legislation by Congress, counteracted some of the expected security in their incumbency.

The advantages of incumbency are vast. One of the largest advantages a congressional incumbent has is the franking privilege. The franking privilege allows any sitting congressman to send mail through the United States Post Office System without charge. The thousands and thousands of dollars "used" by each congressman is huge. Jacobson's research indicates that the average expenditures covered by the franking privilege in 1982 was approximately \$130,000 per congressman. For mail outs of any kind, it is easy to understand how an incumbent has an easier battle financially, as well

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<sup>57</sup> A. Campbell, "Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change." In *Elections and Political Order*, eds. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes. (New York: John Wiley & Sons. 1966).

<sup>58</sup> In the year of 1983.



as, in getting their name out and cause recognized. The incumbency advantage can be broken down in even simpler terms. Name recognition and branding of a politician are key determinants in winning elections and retaining seats.<sup>59</sup> By the means of advertising and credit claiming, a congressman's name becomes known to their constituents. When the voter goes to the polling place to cast their vote choice, the knowledge and recognition of a name may steer their vote in the direction of familiarity. This favorability starts far before the official campaign even begins. Senators have a much easier time gaining media attention and mentions than their House counterparts. They use this tool to help advertise their efforts in Washington and at home. This natural advantage of television media can be a double-edged sword. The negatives are revealed because candidates and their campaign teams have little to no control of the information that is broadcasted about them. Therefore, this easy advantage can easily turn to a negative in some circumstances. For this analysis, incumbency is assessed in what data was used. In Part II of this research, the dependent variable consists of incumbents who won reelection and compares those people to the incumbents who lost.<sup>60</sup>

#### Quality Challenger Theory

According to the research of Abramowitz and Lanoue, the most important factor determining the degree of competition in any congressional election is the quality and effort of the challenger. We will refer to this as the Quality Challenger Theory. As far as financial backing, national parties almost always back the incumbent with their financial "guns" and resources. The advantage incumbents have in acquiring campaign resources,

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<sup>59</sup> This can be comparable to Mayhew's advertising mechanism to congressional elections and campaigning.

<sup>60</sup> Or those who were not up for reelection, etc. Please see Data and methodology sections for a more detailed explanation.

volunteers, endorsements, and money is crucial to their stability and success. Financially, incumbents enjoy a 2-to-1 advantage over their challengers in their expenditures. The campaign itself is the only period of time that a challenger has to feasibly show the voters that he or she is the best person for the job. For the incumbent, on the other hand, no period of time constrains them in this way. Incumbents really start their campaign long before it officially begins.<sup>61</sup> They have time and resources to prove to their voters that they are doing an efficient job representing them. Abramowitz and Lanoue indicate that the average voter would rather re-elect an incumbent, even if they only deem their past performances to be mediocre, than gamble on the unknown challenger. This ambiguous element of time to prove oneself is an undisputed advantage that comes with being the sitting office holder. On the other side of the coin, a quality challenger can be a force to be reckoned with. A challenger with the right resources, strong personal brand, unlimited cash and volunteer supply, a challenger can push an incumbent off their "white horse." Specifically, in Part II of this research, a strong competitor variable is used in the logistic regression.

### Campbell's Surge and Decline Theory

In mid-term elections, the president does not have a tangible role in the outcome, though they do have an impact. In almost every midterm election, the party of the sitting president loses seats in Congress. Some argue that this is a reflection of the economy or presidential disapproval, and both could be right. Campbell coined the theory called Surge and Decline to speak to this almost certainty in midterm election results.<sup>62</sup> He

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<sup>61</sup> Please reference the Permanent Campaign Theory.

<sup>62</sup> A. Campbell, "Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change." In *Elections and Political Order*, eds. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966).



outlines a difference between "core voters" and "periphery voters."<sup>63</sup> Both kinds of voters tend to visit their polling places on presidential election days, but only the more knowledgeable and dissatisfied core voters are the ones who come back to vote in the midterm elections. Abramowitz and Lanoue explain the Surge and Decline theory's two main flaws. The first flaw in the theory is that it does not explain the variance in seats lost in midterm elections. The second flaw is in regards to who does and does not vote in midterm elections. The study by Kernell in 1977 says that there is roughly the same proportion of "kinds" of voters that vote in both presidential and midterm election years.<sup>64</sup> Kernell also explains that negative voting accounts for a great deal of the president's midterm election failures. It is clear that, in part, congressional elections are impacted by the hype and events, (or lack thereof), surrounding the office of the presidency.

Finally, current events and flux in the economy impact the variance in midterm elections and incumbency success. Even under the best economic conditions, incumbent congressional races that share the president's party still lose seats. The variance and constantly changing nature of the president's approval rating can certainly play its part, as well. Furthermore, every election is unique. There are no two that have the same characteristics; therefore it is impossible to predict with certainty what the result will be. It is hard to gauge just how much national events and issues will play in the fate of midterm elections. Though we cannot predict the specifics, we can vaguely indicate that being an incumbent gives you a certain set of advantages. They are impacted by being a part of a midterm election cycle, and are in some part swayed by the national tides of the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



president and issues surrounding the office. To empirically test this theory, a senator's party affiliation will be one of the independent variables analyzed in both parts of this analysis. For Part I, this can empirically show which political party is more connected. In Part II, by comparing the significance of this variable's impact, in relation to the sitting president's party, we will see how much the Surge and Decline Theory really affects a midterm election cycle.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Dependent Variable

##### *Part I*

For the first part of this analysis, a scale of connectivity has been constructed to measure our dependent variable.<sup>65</sup> It will be irrelevant to my research question to determine which specific component of social networking is the most efficient for political use, but rather, if the high frequency in new media communication proves to be more effective than those who abstain<sup>66</sup> from using the new media realm of communications.<sup>67</sup> For this reason, I will be using a binary measure of those United States Senators who are well-connected<sup>68</sup> and those who are less connected<sup>69</sup>. This binary measure began with a basic rubric of options of possible forms of connectivity.<sup>70</sup> The website senate.gov provides a list of every senator in the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Congress and a “link” to their online contact form. It can be assumed that the senator approved this link, so it can be understood that this website is the senator’s “official” website. For each senator’s website, the preset rubric was followed. For each senator from the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Senate, a type of new media connectivity was circled and accumulated into a count, and then broken down into a consistent binary measure.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> You can find the rubric used to measure connectivity in Appendix.

<sup>66</sup> (Or use in smaller insignificant frequencies).

<sup>67</sup> After extensive research, it should be made clear that different new media forms accomplish very different goals. For politicians, there may be a specific type of new media that is more beneficial than another, however, this research will not be assessing those claims. As already mentioned, frequency of new media use will be the crux of this research.

<sup>68</sup> (assigned a “1” value).

<sup>69</sup> (assigned a “0” value).

<sup>70</sup> (See Appendix A for rubric).

<sup>71</sup> Those senators who employed eight or more elements of Internet communication were deemed well connected (1), and those who used seven or less elements of Internet communication were assigned (0).

Using this measure, it is easy to assess what United States senators were connected more than others. In order for a senator to receive the score of a “1,” they utilized eight or more indicators of “connectivity” in accordance to the rubric used. If the senator only used seven indicators or less, they were scored as a “0,” to indicate that they were not well connected. All United States senators from the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress were ranked with this approach.

## *Part II*

The dependent variable changes as this analysis moves onto its second objective. The second objective of this analysis hopes to determine whether or not the senator’s connectivity positively impacted the probability of a winning election. For this dependent variable, the measure of analysis is also binary. According to this binary regression method, all the senators of the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Senate were evaluated. Incumbents who won the reelection and retained their seat were granted a “1.” Those incumbents who lost the reelection were given a “0.”<sup>72</sup> This will help us confirm the second half of our hypothesis, which seeks to prove that those senators with a higher connectivity rating have a higher probability of winning elections. If an incumbent and challenger experience a close race, and the incumbent is well connected, we may be able to determine that their new media involvement was the push that helped secure their win.

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<sup>72</sup> Everyone who did not run for reelection and win was given a “0” because the goal of this research is to determine a winning probability- even if a senator was not up for election this time, giving them a “0” did not mess with the purpose of our data collection. It is not important for the results to know the specifics of the remaining units of analysis.



## Independent and Control Variables

### *Part I*

There are some distinctions that must be made regarding the main independent variable discussion. Most of what describes the unit of analysis under consideration, the senators in the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Congress, falls into one of three categories. The first category has to do with the make up of the actual “office holder or person,” who holds the office. These variables may include variables like the senator’s party affiliation,<sup>73</sup> education level, gender, age, and more. These various factors will provide us with an index so we can identify the personal qualities that define the person who holds the office. The second category of research will define the “constituency or district” the senator represents. Some examples of variables in this category may include if the governor of the state is a member of the same party as the senator, if both senators that represent the state are from the same party or from different parties, how many computers per household with Internet access, and how many publicly accessible computers with Internet access. Thirdly, it is important to determine the senators’ “position” in the Senate. This assessment may include committee membership, leadership roles, legislation introduced, co sponsorships, and when the senator is up for reelection. This third category will test a very similar<sup>74</sup> hypotheses’ that Christakis and Fowler discuss with centrality and the Reinforcement Effect within Congress.<sup>75</sup> For purposes of simplifying these categories, we will discuss them each in terms of the hypothesis they

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<sup>73</sup> Party affiliation for those who are “independent” will be determined by what party they caucus with. (i.e., Lieberman is an Independent, but due to the fact that he caucuses with the Democrats, for our analysis, he will be labeled a Democrat.)

<sup>74</sup> Although the main concepts were inspired from Christakis and Fowler’s research on this matter, it is not exactly congruent to their study. The data was pulled independently from their research.

<sup>75</sup> See literature review on the Centrality hypothesis by Christakis and Fowler to understand their premise in further detail.

represent. The hypotheses are as follows, consecutively, (1) Office Holder Hypothesis, (2) Constituency/Location Hypothesis, and (3) Centrality Hypothesis.

## *Part II*

For the second part of our research, the independent variables will differ.

Winning elections is an age-old subject of research and can be discussed in accordance to a series of theories and concepts. Incumbency is a huge factor that determines within a degree of certainty, the probability that a senator will retain their seat. The Permanent Campaign Theory comes into play most with the idea of incumbency. In accordance to this theory, the senators who have served one or more terms prior to the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress term would have employed consistent communication throughout the course of their service to stay in touch with their constituents and advertise their successes. David Mayhew's research on congressional elections is a perfect example to add to the continuousness of congressional campaigning. As aforementioned in this research analysis, the dependent variable in Part I of the research will be switched to an independent for Part II. This helps solidify their connection and adds a nice level of consistency throughout this research. This variable is the same connectivity rating, as outlined in the first half of the "dependent variable" sub section.<sup>76</sup> Another independent variable for the second part of this analysis will be the level in which the election is opposed. If a candidate runs unopposed, or opposed by an unqualified person, the election becomes significantly biased on the side of the candidate in question.

The variable of party identification will come into play in Part II of this research as well. Per our literature review section, midterm elections are a breed of their very

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<sup>76</sup> Please see Appendix for the rubric used to assess connectivity.

own. For this specific election, the party of the sitting president will expect to see some backlash. In accordance with the poor presidential approval rating, coupled with the suffering American economy, it is natural to assume that the Democratic party will see some significant backlash as they ride the negative coattails of their President. Party as an independent variable should see some movement due to this.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

After the scoring of our dependent variables had been completed, and all variables, independent, controls, and dependent, had been inserted into SPSS, our data was then free to be dissected. As a matter of practice, to understand the dependent variables better, look to this formula for visual comprehension. The initial hypothesis are as follows, and will be tested for accuracy as the research progresses.

#### Model for Part I

$$Y_1 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + X_6$$

*When:*

$Y_1$  = Connectivity rating

$X_1$  = Age of Senator

$X_2$  = Party of Senator

$X_3$  = Percentage of Computers per Household (by state)

$X_4$  = State Poverty Ranking

$X_5$  = Cosponsorship Rating

$X_6$  = Leadership Rating of Senator

#### Model for Part II

$$Y_2 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + X_6$$

*When:*

$Y_1$  = Winning Elections

$X_1$  = Connectivity Rating

$X_2$  = State Poverty Ranking

$X_3$  = Leadership Rating of Senator

$X_4$  = Opposition Status

$X_5$  = Party of Senator

$X_6$  = Cosponsorship Rating

## Part I

I hypothesize that the ideal combination of variables is the following; younger in age, Republican, from a state with high personal computer ownership and a low state poverty rating, who is central to the operations of the Senate, will each additively contribute to being “well connected.”<sup>77</sup> In order to test these independent variables in their relationship to our dependent variable, regression models were constructed. Prior to any definitive conclusions in results, the data collected will be discussed in full.

In the 111<sup>th</sup> Senate, there are a total of one hundred members. For all data that was collected, our “n” value remained 100. Every variable was reported in full, and no data was left out to intentionally skew our results. Our first indication that “something was going on” was the split in our data set between those who were “well connected” in comparison to those in our data set who were deemed “less connected.” The percent of senators in the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Senate who were “well connected” was 38%, whereas those who were not well connected were distributed at 62%. This shows a variance significant enough to grant our research question merit. We ran a full model of the frequencies of our variables, and will discuss the full model of the results of our independent variables and their reported findings.

As I analyzed the party of the office holder and the frequency in which the data reported, I found the split in overall data to be 59% Democratic and 41% Republican. In this matrix, it is important to explain that although I did not grant a value to those who are labeled as “Independents,” a decision rule was granted to count them in the party in which they caucus. For example, Senator Joe Lieberman is an Independent, but because

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<sup>77</sup> As you will recall, “well connected” will indicate that the senator utilizes eight or more different indicators of connectivity.

he caucuses with the Democratic Party, he was considered a Democrat for this specific research.

Then the percentages were pulled from those beneath the poverty line in each state, and used an ordinal scale created by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ordinal scale layout for this variable was; 1= less than 11% living below the poverty level, 2= between 11-12.9% below the poverty level, 3= between 13-15.9% below the poverty level, and 4=16% or more living below the poverty level. In other words, the higher their ordinal rank, the more people in their state that are living beneath the poverty line, as indicated by the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of those cases fell in the "3" ranking, this explains that 34% of the states contain between 13-15.9% of individuals living below the poverty line. If ordinal levels "2" and "3" were lumped together, which would encompass all those states who hold between 11-15.9% living beneath the poverty line, the data shows that a majority of 59% of the indicators for this variable fit between those percentages. This grants this variable variance to test in this research with accuracy.

The percentage of individual citizens that have access to an Internet accessible computer in their own home is also an important variable. This variable has the ability of being an indicator that shows which senators *should* be utilizing the Internet and new media communication more than others. If *more* of their constituents have access to receive communication through the mechanism of the computer, then the more senators should use new media as a pathway of communication to reach their constituents. The data shows that 16 senators, (eight states), have a constituency where between 80 and 85 percent have a computer in their own home to access the Internet. Furthermore, 50% of



the United States senators come from a state that 75% or more of their constituents have an Internet accessible computer within the walls of their household.

Although the gender majority in the U.S. Senate has always been skewed towards the males, it is important to see what affects the gender of the candidate had on their connectivity. The data shows that 83% of the senators in the 111<sup>th</sup> Senate are males, to the 17% of females. The standard deviation for the entire variable of gender was .48783. This will help us equalize the great difference in the presence of men to women. Men represented a standard deviation of .49476, whereas the women held a standard deviation of .43724. As the standard deviation for men is closer to the standard deviation of all of "n" (.48783), it can be understood, that as a general measure of central tendency, the men vary less from the average than the women of the Senate do.

In accordance to the Christakis and Fowler Centrality and Reinforcement Effect theories, the number of bills sponsored by each member was analyzed to see how involved and how communicative they are with other members in the body. This variable varied immensely as the range started from two sponsored bills, to 493 sponsored bills.

The cosponsored bills variable was to offer the same kind of understanding as the sponsored bills, however, Christakis and Fowler showed that the *more* bills that they have cosponsored, the *more* connected they should be. This fact Christakis and Fowler contribute is due to the logistical understanding of the process behind writing and developing a bill. Fowler tells us that in cosponsoring a bill, you are spending time and energy with the sponsor of the bill, which more than likely should indicate a very personal relationship with another senator. The range, much like the sponsored bill

variable was expansive and varied greatly. The starting point of the range was 20 cosponsored bills, and the high end of the range capped off with 419 cosponsored bills.

The Leadership variable used in both Part I and Part II required some specific decision rules. Leadership was measured in a binary code. A senator earned a "1" if they were a party leader, committee chair, or the ranking committee member. The party selected leader roles that were acknowledged for this research include; Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Vice-Chair of Democratic Caucus, Chairman of DSCC, Conference secretary, Chair of the steering committee, Minority Leader, Minority Whip, Conference Chair, Conference Vice-Chair, Policy Committee Chairmen, and Chairman of the NRSC. If a senator was both a party leader and a committee chair or ranking committee member, their score remained as a "1." All other senators who did not fit into any of those categories were scored as a "0."

Age of a senator, was hypothesized to have an impact on their Internet connectivity, mainly due to the generational differences of comfort using this means of communication. To put this in perspective, those senators who were born in 1947 or later used a typewriter (or something else) in college for their research papers. It is for this reason; the younger senators are predicted to be *more* connected than the older senators, because they are *more* comfortable in the logistical functions of computers and the Internet. The range in age in the 111<sup>th</sup> U.S. Senate spans from the low of 41, to the high of 93 years of age. The age of 61, had the highest frequency of 6 senators, while 37% of the senators were the age of 60 and younger. If this is a significant factor in connectivity, and the younger senators have an advantage in this respect, then this variable has the opportunity to really shake up "the good ole boy" reliability on those senators who have



held their seat for years upon years. The concept of seniority and incumbency may then have a third missing factor.

## Part II

The variable connectivity, the dependent variable in Part I, was used in this analysis to tie the results together in a comprehensive manner. For Part II of this analysis, connectivity in the independent variable form was coded in the same binary fashion as in Part I.<sup>78</sup> Of the 25 cases in Part II, 19 were “not connected” with six as “connected. Even with the decreased number of cases, this shows some variance in the data presented, indicating that “something” is going on, though what that “something” is, we do not have enough information due to our small “n” value to concretely know.

The poverty rating per state was also an independent variable used for Part II of this research. Unfortunately, our small “n” value makes it impossible to discern the impact the poverty rating had on winning elections.

The Leadership variable was coded in a binary capacity. A score of a “1” indicated that the senator was selected as a party leader, committee chair, or ranking committee member. A score of a “0” encompassed the remaining cases that did not fit into the parameters to be scored a “1.” This variable in the Part II descriptive statistics was almost split evenly down the middle. Thirteen of the 25 total cases were scored a “1,” indicating their leadership involvement in the senate. However, twelve cases of the 25 total were scored a “0.” In Part II we see very little variance with this variable, and lack a significant number of cases to determine the role this variable played.

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<sup>78</sup> A score of “1” indicates that the senator was “well connected” and a score of a “0” indicates the senator was “not connected” or “less” connected.



The variable used to gauge strong opposition, as a test to understand the weight of worthy competitors was an interesting variable to code in the data set. Per the results of the 2010 midterm election, a senator was considered a "1" if they had a strong competitor in their race to regain their seat. A strong competitor was defined as any non-incumbent who scored within 10 percentage points of the sitting incumbent. In Part II, this variable had seven cases indicate the presence of a strong competitor. Alternatively, there were eighteen cases of the 25 total that did not have a strong competitor present. Due to the small "n" value, this data is inconclusive.

As to be expected, the split between political party affiliations is almost down the middle. Of the 25 cases total in Part II, there were thirteen Democrats and twelve Republicans. Due to the small number of cases, it is difficult to know if this variable will play a significant role.

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY

## Results

*Part I*

Part I of this research was analyzed in a full logistic regression using SPSS. As Table 1 illustrates, three variables stick out as statistically significant.

Table 1

*The Determinants of Political Connectivity: Evidence from Logistic Regression*

Variables	(1)
Age of Senator	.017
Party of Senator	1.036*
Computers per Household (%)	-.048
State Poverty Rating	-.481*
Cosponsorships	.003
Leadership Rating	-.683*
Pseudo-R2	.105
X2	.235
N	100

*Note.* (\*) Denotes statistical significance at the 1.0 levels.

Political affiliation was statistically significant using a two-tailed test. With a B score showing statistical significance, the data shows that the Republicans yield a higher

level of connectivity, on average. This provides a higher incentive for Republicans to communicate faster, more efficiently, and advertise their contributions in high frequencies. The underdog is always looking for the next big opportunity to jump ahead, and even if new media communications was a means of communication that seemed fairly experimental, the Republicans had more of a purpose for taking an experimental risk in order to fight to regain power in the senate.

The state poverty variable is another standout in these regression results. With a B score showing statistical significance using a one-tail test. Though the B score was negative, this also makes sense according to the predictions made in this analysis.

Thirdly, the leadership variable is another stand out in this logistic regression. With a B score showing statistical significance, this variable, arguably explains a great deal about a senators probability to be connected. Though this is statistically significant on a one-tail test, the B coefficient is negative. The results shown here are a perfect display of just how weighted and important the Incumbency Advantage Theory and Leadership centrality can be. As senators grow in their seniority ranking and leadership positions within their own party and in various committees, they are investing in their personal brand at exponential levels. The more central a senator becomes to the inter-workings of the senate, a natural cost benefit analysis is made. The longer they hold their seat and contribute in large public ways, the less there is a need to plug in on Twitter, Facebook, and write a personal blog. In their minds, and likely in the perception of their constituents, as well, their work product speaks more concretely than frivolous talking would. This also explains the significance of party affiliation in further detail. The data shows an interesting compensation affect taking place. Those senators who are in strong



leadership positions are, by virtue of the Incumbency Theory and years of affirming research, fairly safe. Those who are not secure with a foot in senate leadership are using new media communications to lessen the security gap. Although the data does not have the capability to state whether or not connectivity used efficiently can trump leadership standing in an incumbent-it is safe to assume that, in the very least, connectivity may offer the only alternative to give a senate leader a run for their money.

## *Part II*

Due to the discrepancy of “n” values that is outlined in the limitations and assumptions section, Part II of our analysis proved to be inconclusive. Unfortunately, twenty-five cases were not enough to push our hypothesis in any definitive direction. Ideally, this data and information could continue to be collected over time. The higher the number of cases we have, the more variance the data would have, and the clearer the results would be. Even with this unfortunate conclusion, every political scientist knows the limits of purely quantitative and purely qualitative research. Each type of data collection lacks an element that can help explain the void of information. Though this research was quantitatively inconclusive a brief understanding of some of the cases with a qualitative lens can help bridge the gap of the unknown, as well as, give a clearer understanding of why the data fell as it did. This analysis is not meant to be an exhaustive exercise or explanation, but a way to scrape beneath the surface a bit deeper to acknowledge a few situations that strict numbers cannot properly explain.

## *Well Connected and Won Election*

The first comparison was to assess which senators were both well-connected using the dependent variable from Part I of this analysis, and who also won their election,

using the dependent variable from Part II of this analysis. These units were given a “1” for being well connected *and* a “1” for winning their election. The senators who matched this description included; Bennett (CO), Burr (NC), Coburn (OK), Crapo (ID), Grassley (IA), and Murkowski (AK). Of the five who fit these parameters, the only unusual cases were the elections of Lisa Murkowski in the state of Alaska and the election of Michael Bennet in the state of Colorado.

In the case of Michael Bennet from Colorado, the vote was vastly split. There were four separate Independent candidates that each yielded between 10,000 and 37,000 votes each accounting for a total of 5 % of the voting electorate. Bennet also had an incredibly competitive challenger who earned 47% of the votes in comparison to Bennet’s 48%. Bennet is a staunch liberal in a closely divided state and probably benefited from his incumbency advantage and name recognition to a certain extent. However, the crux of his win could possibly be more easily associated with his high new media usage and communications.

Murkowski lost her party primary as the incumbent. As a result, switched her party identification to “Independent,” and ran as a “write-in” candidate. Alaska was one of the last states to confirm the win for Murkowski, as a write-in candidate, because they had to count every hand written name on each ballot. After her win was secured, Murkowski won her seat back (just with different party identification this time) and secured almost 93,000 votes, yielding 40% of the voting electorate. Certainly, Murkowski benefited from her incumbent advantage, but the votes split abnormally also played to her favor. These are some of the factors that contributed to Murkowski’s secured win.



### *Not Connected and Lost Election*

The second comparison was to assess which senators were both not connected using the dependent variable from Part I of this analysis, who also earned a "0" in the dependent variable from Part II which covered those senators who lost, retired, died, or who were not up for reelection. In this case summary comparison I only looked to the open seats to help explain that there was, in fact, "something going on" with my collected data and results. This comparison proves the negation of my sought hypothesis. It may also add weight to the truth that connectivity is the crux of a win or a loss. Those senators who fit these parameters included; Bennet (UT), Dorgan (ND), Feingold (WI), Kaufman (DE), Lincoln (AR), Spector (PA), and Voinovich (OH).

Some of these senators who fit the prescribed categories are easily explained away. Robert Bennet from the state of Utah, lost in his party's primary. Byron Dorgan from North Dakota retired. Kaufman from Delaware was appointed to his seat when Senator Biden became Vice President. Kaufman pledged only to serve the remainder of the term and ultimately decided not to run again. Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania switched from a Republican to a Democrat, then lost in the Democratic primary. George Voinovich from the state of Ohio retired after serving two terms, presenting an open seat in a volatile state.

The remaining two senators who fit the parameters of being not connected and lost their election are more straightforward. Blanche Lincoln from Arkansas was a clear-cut loss. In this case, Arkansas was a very Democratic state, except for presidential elections. In the year of 2009, both senators were Democrats, as well as, three of the four representatives. In addition, the Democrats controlled both houses in the state legislature.



During Lincoln's last year of her term, the Arkansas electorate saw a major ideological shift. As Lincoln remained a steadfast liberal on most issues, her voting electorate was more conservative in their outlook. This discrepancy caused a loss for Lincoln, and a win for her Republican opponent, John Boozman who earned 58% of the votes.

On the same token, Russ Feingold remained steadfastly liberal on issues, while his voting electorate changed in the last year of his term. In this election, however, his opponent, Ron Johnson (R), played a heavy role in the outcome. Johnson was a businessman who had never run for public office. During the course of the election demonstrated a keen awareness for economic issues, which would prove a worthy asset, as the state of Wisconsin's economy in 2011 would be a focal point of the nation. In this case, the economic uncertainty, change of Wisconsin electorate, and strong opponent weighed more heavily on the outcome than both Feingold's incumbency advantage, as well as, his lack of new media connectivity.

*Well Connected and Lost Election/Not Connected and Won Election*

Sometimes the "off" cases in a data set are more telling than the ones that clearly prove an intended hypothesis or path of reason. I found this to certainly be the case with some of the following cases.

In the election of Barbara Boxer from the State of California, the data shows her to be not well connected, yet she won. Boxer is a long time incumbent from a consistently liberal state. Boxer's opponent, Carly Fiorina had no political experience, was very wealthy with a retirement package that became an easy target for both the media and Boxer to hit. Even with these issues, Fiorina still earned 42% of the voting

electorate to Boxer's 52% percent for the win. Obama's negative approval ratings may have also impacted Boxer in this mid-term election because they are both Democrats.

Jim Demint from the strong Republican leaning State of South Carolina also was not well connected but won. His opponent had no political experience, was accused of wayward personal activities, was African American in a southern state, and had no college education. Demint's name recognition, and complete lack of opposition made this election a walk in the park. Had he been well connected, there would be no difference in the results.

Kirsten Gillibrand from the State of New York was a senator who was appointed by the Governor for the seat of Hilary Clinton after her promotion to Secretary of State. Gillibrand was heavily endorsed by the other sitting senator from New York, female and physically attractive, and was liberal in a very liberal state. Her opponent, Joseph DioGuardi was gruff by nature, a Republican executive businessman with a surly reputation and exhibited these qualities throughout the election. Gillibrand won 62% to DioGuardi's 36%, so again, we have a case where a change in the incumbent's connectivity score would have had no impact on the circumstances surrounding the election.

Daniel Inouye from the State of Hawaii won his reelection with 75% of the voting electorate. One political tweet says, "Inouye could have been dead and still won this election." Inouye was also a native Hawaiian, a veteran of the army brigade, lost an arm from combat, and left the military highly decorated. His connectivity would have had no impact on this run-away election.

Patrick Leahy, from the State of Vermont is very similar to the case of Inouye in Hawaii. Leahy was not well connected, yet he won his election. This was a predictable win, with no need for heavy campaigning and communication with his electorate. He has been the sitting senator from Vermont for a very long time, is ideologically liberal from an ideologically liberal state, and is influential within his circle. There was no need or incentive to be well connected for Senator Leahy.

John McCain, from the State of Arizona is an interesting case. In the background analysis of the Internet and new media, Senator McCain was the stand-out “maverick” laying the foundation for political new media connectivity, yet the data says McCain is relatively not well connected but won his election. Senator McCain is a long time incumbent, a war hero, and an incredibly influential member of the Senate. He presents a possible “hole” in the data collected in this analysis. McCain’s frequency in television appearances is incredibly high. He is the perfect example of Mayhew’s credit-claiming and advertising campaign elements. In addition, two Independents ran in this election with one earning over 72,000 votes, and the other earning over 22,000. The vote was split which impacted the results of the win. McCain still won his election with a 59% victory. His case shows that there may be a more multi-faceted view of new media connectivity that was omitted from this research.

Patty Murray from the State of Washington only won her election by 4 percentage points. She was not well connected, yet she still won her election. This race was back and forth all the way up to the very last minute of the call. Murray is a strong liberal from an closely divided state, and she benefited from her incumbency advantage drastically. Her incumbency and name recognition was really the crux of her win. Her



opponent, Dino Rossi was very conservative in a state with an opposing ideology, and many political experts were surprised that he stayed as close as he did throughout the course of the election. Connectivity could have helped Murray secure her standing as the winner, as well as, Rossi's connectivity, though not calculated in this research, could have been the "oomph" that allowed his candidacy to be as competitive as it was.

Harry Reid from the State of Nevada was not well connected, yet won his election. Reid was a long time incumbent as well as a party leader in the senate. He had a rookie opponent who was gaff prone and unpredictable. Reid also had the support of the casinos, which encompasses the overwhelming majority of the state's economy and businesses. Reid only won by a five point spread, and could have been heavily influenced by President Obama's coattails of poor favorability ratings in the mid term election, as well as, the highest percentage of home foreclosures in any state and a very high percentage of unemployment.. In this case, a change in connectivity probably would have yielded the same or similar results.

Charles "Chuck" Schumer from the State of New York was a long time incumbent, and ideologically liberal in an ideologically liberal state. He is also Jewish in a state with a relatively high voting electorate that is also Jewish. He did not have a serious opponent, and much like Senator McCain, has a high frequency of television appearance and effectively uses Mayhew's campaigning components. A change in his connectivity level would have probably yielded a similar outcome.

Richard Shelby from the State of Alabama is one of the solid "good ole boys" in the Senate. The data showed Shelby as not well connected, but he won his election by an overwhelming margin. He is very conservative from a conservative state and a ranking

member of a very influential committee in the Senate. In accordance to McCain and Schumer, Shelby also has frequent television appearances and employs Mayhew's ABC's of congressional campaigning to their fullest extent. Shelby won by a huge margin, earning 65% of the voting electorate. It is probably safe to say that a change in his connectivity would have yielded the same results.

John Thune from the State of South Dakota was not well connected but secured a win. He was not opposed. Thune is an anomaly in the relative scheme of the election.

David Vitter from the State of Louisiana was not well connected but won the election. There were three Independent candidates that participated in the election, each earning over 8,000 votes. The voting electorate was spread and split. In Vitter's personal life, he admitted to having an extramarital affair, which created a buzz in media attention prior to his reelection. Even with this element, Vitter won the election with 57% of the votes, securing his seat. The constituents in the State of Louisiana are also a unique breed unto themselves, which would take an expansive amount of research to understand the overall weight of the contribution of that isolated element. In the case of Vitter, it is safe to say that a change in his connectivity would not have produced different results.

Finally, Ron Wyden from the State of Oregon was not well connected but won his election. Wyden is an ideological liberal from a state that mirrors his ideology. In addition, there were three Independent candidates in this election who each earned over 13,000 votes, which spread the votes around more than normal. Overall, Wyden came out a success with a win of 57% of the voting electorate. In this final case, it is also safe to say that a change in connectivity would not have caused a change in results.



## CHAPTER VI

## DISCUSSION

*"It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard."*  
 –Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy*<sup>79</sup>

The scope of the Internet is impossible to even imagine. It is a multi leveled, multi faceted, and a multi layered super organism. It seems to have a mind of its very own. George Orwell, in *Politics and the English Language*, said,

...It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning.<sup>80</sup>

This was where I initially discovered the gap of information in new media political communications. A vast number of claims are made speaking to the positive effects the Internet renders, but how is "positive" defined? What is the pragmatic cost/benefit transaction with this form of communication? Will this "positive" creature change how human beings interact with each other? What is to come? The idea of this enormity in size and scope provides merit for discussion on the societal, social, and other political implications new media communications may render.

As I reflect on the common themes surrounding new media communications, one of the most frequently analyzed was the notion of the Internet's role in the context of true democracy. For a great deal of people, at the heart of democracy lies the idea of free press. In terms of new media, a sense of heightened egalitarianism is present. In combining these two factors; there is a general assumption that the Internet and new media provide a socially equal playing field where people may contribute to the political

<sup>79</sup> Matthew Hindman. *The Myth of Digital Democracy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 142

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 5.



sphere through the mechanism of free speech. But is this really the case? In most of the dialog surrounding new media communications in reference to it's seemingly natural democratic tendencies outline a term called the "digital divide."<sup>81</sup> This is essentially, the cyber equivalent to the socioeconomic divisions experienced in "real life." In other words, certain "disadvantaged groups-blacks, Hispanics, the poor, the elderly, the under educated, and those in rural areas-continue to lag behind in their access to use of the Net."<sup>82</sup> This is precisely the argument that Christakis and Fowler make in their book *Connected*, that social networks and communication are only replications of our networks in our daily lives.<sup>83</sup> In *Connected*, it states,

A person with many friends may become rich and then attract even more friends. This rich-get-richer dynamic means social networks can dramatically reinforce two different kinds of inequalities in our society: situational inequality (some are better off socioeconomically) and positional inequality (some are better off in terms of where they are located in the network.)<sup>84</sup>

Matthew Hindman's research in his book *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, seems to correlate with the above proclamation made by Christakis and Fowler. Hindman goes on to explain, "No democratic theorist expects citizens' voices to be considered exactly equally, but all would agree that pluralism fails whenever vast swaths of the public are systematically unheard in civic debates."<sup>85</sup> He continues to infer that the mechanisms or tools that cause the exclusion may be different in cyber space, but they are still working effectively and leaving a vast number of people on the exterior of important political

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Christakis and Fowler, 31.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Matthew Hindman. *The Myth of Digital Democracy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 12.

participation and exchange of ideas.<sup>86</sup> The sheer size of the Internet drowns the feeble attempts at political discourse. You may be talking through the device of the Internet, but what good is there if no one is receiving the message.<sup>87</sup> E.E. Schattschneider in *The Semi-Sovereign People* is quoted as saying, "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent."<sup>88</sup>

The next general theme regarding the Internet and the array of communication capabilities falls in what philosopher J. Habermas calls "deliberative democracy."<sup>89</sup> For Habermas, this kind of public debate and exchange of ideas is a pluralistic approach to the theory of communicative action.<sup>90</sup> In the general sense, this is pragmatically played out in the form of blogging, wikis, easy search engine capabilities, and the ease in which anyone may voice their opinion in a "public" debate. Matthew Hindman says Habermas' deliberative democracy fails with new media communications, however, because, "some citizens are better than others at articulating their views in rational, reasonable terms."<sup>91</sup> Though I do not oppose free speech by its nature, it is important to indicate that free speech in the context of the U.S. Constitution is not absolute. Regulations are needed to protect the collective. Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert says, "wikiality-a reality where, if enough people agree with a notion, it becomes the truth."<sup>92</sup> Certainly Colbert is

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> If you refer back to the literature review section of this analysis, you will see the connection between this question and the Lasswell Communications Theory. The success of the Communications Theory rests in the knowledge that there is a receiver. It has less to do with the skill of the one providing the information, than it has to do with the basic structural elements that must exist for the communication to prove successful. A receiver is one of those structural elements.

<sup>88</sup> Hindman, 102.

<sup>89</sup> J. Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms*, (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., xl.

<sup>91</sup> Hindman, 138.

<sup>92</sup> Christakis and Fowler, 278.



being provocative with his words, but there is, however, an underlying fear worth discussing.

This fear is legitimacy. The factors of legitimacy and accuracy can be seen in virtual copyright laws, online academic institutions that seemingly provide the same kind of “diploma” as an accredited academic institution, and less tangible- truth.<sup>93</sup> While the pluralistic notion of ideas brought together in an uninhibited community for discussion is normally a great idea, I find there to be many cases where the majority can trample over the minority’s voice and in some cases, threaten the safety of the minority.

This safety of the minority has an interesting spin on Plato’s theory of “useful falsehoods.”<sup>94</sup> In some of his other works this idea is outlined in terms of the gap between appearance and reality. From a laymen’s view of the Internet and the array of capabilities it has, the compiled knowledge in an easy to access location would overwhelmingly be deemed a positive trait. But the Internet is not just a series of online encyclopedias. It is divided and organized by way of subject matter, social conversation, metadata, disease, topic of discussion, and much more. By the very nature of the knowledge of the diverse and intricate organizational techniques used in new media communications, predators are unleashed. Without the same “real life” accountability that is found in television interviews, college classrooms, and real life conversations-a freedom to tap into your “Mr. Hyde” is overwhelmingly tempting. On the social networking site Twitter, the only identity you have is the one you create for yourself. Would you be bolder in your words if they could never be traced back to you? In online

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<sup>93</sup> In Google’s corporate history, an Anonymous Web portal CEO said, “As long as we’re 80 percent as good as our competitors, that’s good enough. Our users don’t really care about search.” Hindman, 58.

<sup>94</sup> Plato. *The Republic Translated by C. D. C. Reeve*, (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc: Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2004), 99.



video games, you can create your own “avatar,” which is a cartooned version made to represent you in the game. Would you display behavior that is more daring when you are only acting in a “form” of yourself in cyber world? On medical forums and chronic disease discussion groups, information is shared amongst one another with the assumption that all participating in the conversation have morally sound motives and are bringing forth honest and helpful information to the other patients. How can we verify that this is truly “reality?” You can’t. No one can. This is why cyber child predators appear as someone trustworthy, when the weight of their reality is so much more catastrophic. Christakis and Fowler state, “One important way in which virtual worlds differ from the real world is our ability to control our own appearance.”<sup>95</sup>

Though some argue that after the cost/benefit analysis is made, the pluralistic sharing of views trumps the rest. After my research here, I disagree. Politically speaking, Robert Putnam’s research in his book *Bowling Alone* should be discussed. Putnam’s research was completed after the strike of the technological advancement of the television. In his words, “the single most important consequence of the television revolution has been to bring us home.”<sup>96</sup> To break down his argument in simple terms; there is a difference in quantity of participation and quality of participation. I believe the Internet and new media communications have only magnified his concerns. People may be tweeting without accountability with rash words more frequently, but does that quantity of communication change anything? The answer is “no.”

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<sup>95</sup> Christakis and Fowler, 261.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon and Schuster), 228.

There is a societal shift that I see to be devastating for my generation and beyond. We lack interpersonal communication skills because we have had very few opportunities to put those skills to work. In conflict management, the tech-generation will immediately go to writing an apology email, rather than a face-to-face discussion of the disagreement. Young adults of the tech-generation have significantly worse spelling and math skills because our computers and phones auto-correct our mistakes and our calculators do the math we were never taught how to work through ourselves. This vast "positive" thing can be an incredible resource if used correctly and approached with morally sound intentions. But due to the fact that there is no feasible way of protecting the weak minority in "cyberland," what trust can be placed there? Matthew Hindman says,

Yet where the Internet has failed to live up to its billing has to do with the most direct kind of political voice. If we consider the ability of ordinary citizens to write things that other people will see, the Internet has fallen far short of the claims that continue to be made about it. It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard.<sup>97</sup>

Though the Internet may not be the one to cast blame upon, there is an issue at hand. There is an obvious problem if the President of the United States is posting to his Twitter account more than he is engaging in critical discussion with his advisors and foreign leaders. There is also an issue at hand if our conflict management skills are depleting and our natural predisposition to empathize with the feelings and concerns of others in a physical exchange. One cannot help but question the possible effects this societal communication shift will have on the institution of marriage. If we, as a society, are more comfortable talking about our feelings through email than in person-the already

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<sup>97</sup> Hindman, 142.

precarious institution is in for a long haul. Though the “micro” focus of the research of this analysis was difficult to conclude with certainty, the “macro” view and its implications have a profound importance that extends far beyond the increased probability of senators to win their elections utilizing social media. The implications are generational. The more our society grows incrementally away from face-to-face communications-the further away we grow from the way God intended for us to interact. The further we move away from the mechanism that God intended for us to interact with one another, the expectations for failure, catastrophe, and societal devastation and deviation will increase. When we reach that point, the connectivity rating of a senator will be but a whisper amongst the screams heard worldwide.



## APPENDIX

## RUBRIC FOR CONNECTIVITY VARIABLE

Senator's Name:Senator's State:Website<sup>98</sup>Email<sup>99</sup>eNewsletter<sup>100</sup>Blog<sup>101</sup>YouTube<sup>102</sup>

RSS Feed

Calendar

Facebook<sup>103</sup>

Twitter

Audio stream-Podcasts<sup>104</sup>


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<sup>98</sup> Websites were deemed "official" only if the link provided from the senate.gov/ website linked from the official senate website to each U.S. Senators' individual one.

<sup>99</sup> If there was some kind of preset web-based email form, the Senator had an email.

<sup>100</sup> Newsletters came in all varieties. Some were distributed weekly, others monthly, etc. If they had an option to subscribe to an Internet based update and communication with the Senator, then this was circled.

<sup>101</sup> Blogs were only counted if there was some form of communication that the Senator seemed to have personally written. A decision rule was made that it had to be in first person.

<sup>102</sup> If the Senator used any type of video component, or visual stream, this was counted.

<sup>103</sup> Facebook was only counted if a link was provided from the Senator's website. As there are "unofficial websites," and "Friends of" websites... there are also variations in Facebook pages. If the candidate utilized their Facebook page regularly and intentionally, there would be a link on their website.

<sup>104</sup> Many of the candidates had radio recordings, as well as weekly podcasts and other audio streams that were available in an archival manner for constituents and others to listen to. Any types of independent audio submissions were deemed acceptable for this indicator.

Text Update Subscription<sup>105</sup>

Photo Gallery-Flickr

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<sup>105</sup> This kind of Internet communication popped up very rarely, however, could be a very efficient type of communication to constituents, especially with the expansion of “smart phones” and phones with Internet capabilities. These often provided an option for someone to insert their cellular telephone number, with the responsibilities of the costs insinuated per their mobile company, in order to receive these texts.

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